



Senator Feinstein, Representative Pombo Urge Army Corps of  
Engineers to Shore Up Delta Levees  
September 6, 2005

**Washington, DC** – Calling the catastrophic collapse of levees in New Orleans a “wake-up call for Californians,” Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Representative Richard Pombo (R-Calif.) today urged the Army Corps of Engineers to address the deterioration of levees in California.

Last year, the CALFED legislation sponsored by Senator Feinstein and Representative Pombo, Chairman of the House Resources Committee, authorized \$90 million to help shore up the levee system along the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. That money still needs to be appropriated.

**“A major breach in these levees could imperil hundreds of thousands of people and endanger most of the State’s water supply, Senator Feinstein said. “As we have seen in New Orleans, it would be a dramatic mistake to further delay the repairs that are necessary to protect communities from the ravages of floodwaters.”**

**“In addition to the human tragedies, a massive flood could devastate our agricultural economy the same way Katrina decimated one of America's largest and most important sources of energy,” Representative Pombo said. “I hope this terrible tragedy never happens again anywhere, but we must be prepared for anything. Maintaining and strengthening our levee system has to be a top priority for all Californians, and rest assured, Senator Feinstein and I will make sure the work gets done.”**

The following is the text of the letter sent today to Lt. Gen. Carl A Strock, Commanding General of the Army Corps of Engineers:

Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock  
Chief of Engineers – Commanding General  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Strock:

As Americans our first response to the disastrous levee collapse in New Orleans is to do what we can to help. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of New Orleans, and we are contributing what we can to assist them.

This disaster is also a wake-up call for Californians. For years, we have known about the severe flood risks we face, but like Louisiana have been unable to find the funding to do the necessary repairs.

One of our most vulnerable points is the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. U.C. Davis Professor Jeffrey Mount has estimated that if we don't take effective action, there is a 2-in-3 chance that a major storm or earthquake will cause widespread levee collapse in the next 50 years.

In other words, if we don't address this problem, we may suffer the same fate as Louisiana – it's just a matter of time. A massive Delta levee failure could severely harm the area's farms, its rapidly growing towns, and the majority of the State's water supply, which passes through the Delta.

To address this problem in the short-term, we sponsored CALFED legislation enacted last year that authorized \$90 million to repair the most vulnerable of Delta levees. We understand that so far you have identified 200 miles of the levees that are priorities to repair.

Can you tell us what else the Army Corps of Engineers has done so far to identify or address problems with Delta levees? If we were able to fund the \$90 million authorization, how much of the problem would that address? Have there been problems in finding the 35% required local match for specific Delta levee repair projects?

Clearly, over the long-term, much more needs to be done. At this point, we don't even have a good handle on the different options, and what they might cost. If you were to collaborate with the State of California on a study of long-term solutions for protecting the Delta and our water supply, how much funding would be required to complete such a study? How long would it take to complete?

During this current widespread attention to flooding issues, we have a window of opportunity to better protect California's homes, our farms, and our water supply. We look forward to your response and working with you further on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

Richard Pombo  
Chairman, House Resources Committee